

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**McLaughlin Public School  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003-2004**

**Team Members:** Rita Pettigrew; Education Specialist, Barb Boltjes; Education Specialist and Ann Larsen; Special Education Programs,

**Dates of On Site Visit:** January 13 and 14, 2004

**Date of Report:** January 27, 2004

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

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<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Child find articles

- Screening announcement
- Referral/evaluation/placement data
- File reviews
- Enrollment data
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) annual application
- General district information
- Screening list
- Data table I, age and placement alternatives
- Annual application for funds
- Suspension/expulsion data
- Child count data
- District budget
- Parent surveys

### **Meets requirements**

The McLaughlin School district screens children referred through several sources, including parents and outside agencies, each year. Teacher assistance teams are used and child find activities to help the pre-referral process and promptly evaluates all students referred for possible identification.

There are no private schools in the district. The district participates in all out-of-district Individual Education Programs (IEPs) by being present at the meetings or through conference calls.

The district does have all students with disabilities participate in statewide/district assessments and high percentages of our students with disabilities stay in school and graduate. Based on this information, the district is making progress on performance goals and indicators for special education in South Dakota.

The district follows the comprehensive plan procedures that meet the requirements of the state and federal guidelines when addressing long-term suspension and expulsion for children with and without disabilities. District policy is revised to meet any new or revised policies/procedures regarding the development of IEP, uses of behavioral interventions and procedural safeguards.

The district ensures it employs or contracts with an adequate supply of personnel who are appropriately supervised, and fully licensed or certified, to work with children with disabilities.

### **Needs improvement**

The district needs to improve the uses of data based decision making procedures to review and analyze school district level data to determine if the district is making progress through performance goals and indicators. When the principals and teacher committees review the districts tests scores, students with disabilities are not analyzed separately.

### **Out of compliance**

The staff training at McLaughlin School District needs to more closely correlate with the needs identified by the staff and the staff needs to have more opportunity to share in the planning of such training.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle One, General Supervision.

**Needs improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that personnel development and data review for students with disabilities needs to be improved.

The district has taken steps to improve the uses of data based decision making procedures to review and analyze school district level data to determine if the district is making progress through performance goals and indicators. Inservice was recently conducted for special education staff on how to gather data and determine progress for students with a disability. An interview with the special education director indicated this issue would continue to be monitored for improvement.

With the new state assessment system for accountability, the district has started to analyze separately test scores of student with disabilities. An interview with the special education director indicated this issue would also continue to be monitored for improvement.

**Out of compliance**

The monitoring team did not validate personnel development as an area of non-compliance in the district. Since the district identified personnel development as an area of concern last spring, staff have taken steps to improve training. For “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB), the district developed an improvement plan, which has reinforced the districts efforts in assuring teachers have proper training to meet the needs of all children. With the NCLB improvement plan, the district should continue to improve in personnel development.

<b>Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education</b>
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All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Child count data
- District budget
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) annual application
- Parent surveys
- Data table I, age and placement
- Student file reviews
- Data tables C, suspension/expulsion

**Promising practice**

The steering committee concluded the school-wide positive intervention strategies/incentive program for all students is a promising practice.

**Meets requirements**

Based on parent surveys and data collected by the state, McLaughlin School District provides a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all eligible children with disabilities. The district does provide FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more

than 10 cumulative school days, based on the comprehensive plan and student documentation. All eligible children are provided extended school year from the district.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Promising practices**

The review team validated the school wide positive strategies/incentive program for all students as a promising practices. The program was implemented in school year 2002-2003 to address such issues as tardiness, classroom behavior, completing homework and listening skills. Students have the opportunity to earn points in every class on a daily basis. The points are redeemable every mid-term at the incentive store, for items such as snacks, pencils, T-shirts, pool party, bowling party, movie tickets gifts for Mother's Day, etc. and other ways. Data was kept which indicated referrals to the principal office were down at the end of the school year compared to the year before.

The McLaughlin School District is a member of the Northwest Area Schools Multi-District/Educational Cooperative, which has given students in the district an opportunity to access a variety of vocational services. The vocational program has eight classroom units in the following areas; Agriculture, Basic Mechanics Technology, Building Trades, Computer Aided Design/Computer Aided Mechanics (CAD/CAM), Electricity/Electronics, Health Occupations, Metal Fabrications and Quantity Food. The vocational units are mobile and travel between eight districts. Each unit stays in a district for one semester. The units are on a four-year cycle giving students the opportunity to take each unit/class through out their high school career. Students attend the class two periods per day allowing the student to earn one credit per semester for the class.

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle Two, Free Appropriate Public Education.

### **Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation**

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Multidisciplinary team/eligibility report
- Comprehensive plan
- Student file reviews
- Compliance monitoring report
- Interview
- Teacher surveys
- Prior notice/consent
- Parent surveys
- Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) needs assessment
- Table A general district information

## **Meets requirements**

Based on the district's comprehensive plan and file reviews, the district conducts evaluations using a variety of valid, standardized tests, administered by trained, knowledgeable personnel and accurately reported to the team. The evaluation process includes parental input. The district acquires parental consent and completes sufficient evaluations to determine eligibility. Prior notice with informed consent was obtained before evaluations were administered in 100% of the student files reviewed.

At all initial evaluation and reevaluation meetings, the district uses a multidisciplinary team assessment report form, in addition to all evaluation reports, to help determine whether a child has a disability, and if so, which category. The district gives copies of all multidisciplinary team assessment reports and evaluation reports to all parents.

The district reevaluates children at least every 3 years and makes every effort (certified mail, home delivery, personal contact) to acquire consent and parental input prior to evaluations. All students dismissed in the 2002-2003 school years were evaluated and a multidisciplinary team assessment report completed before dismissal occurred.

## **Out of compliance**

The steering committee concluded from file reviews that the following areas do not meeting compliance according to state & federal regulations: class observations for students with learning disabilities, functional evaluation and transition evaluation.

Class observations were not consistently conducted and documented for students with learning disabilities. Functional evaluation was not conducted consistently in all of the areas of suspected disability and transition evaluation was not conducted consistently during required evaluation periods.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle Three, Appropriate Evaluation, with the exception of evaluation procedures. See information under: Out of Compliance

### **Out of compliance**

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures

ARSD 24:05:25:20 IEP team to evaluate, interpret, and explain

The district is required to ensure that a variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather relevant functional and development information about the child. Through a review of five student files that presented students with fine and gross motor concerns, the monitoring team found functional evaluation was not completed. In those same files, fine and gross motor evaluation results were record in percentile scores, which made it difficult to determine if the student demonstrated performance on a standardized assessment instrument falling at least 1.5 standard deviations below the mean. The special education director indicated she was not able to convert these scores to standard scores. She relies on the occupational and/or physical therapist's expertise, who are not always at meetings when evaluations are reviewed with parents and eligibility is determined. Therefore, fine and gross motor evaluation data is not consistently interpreted and explained to parents by a knowledgeable person.

The monitoring team was unable to validate that class observations were not consistently conducted and documented for students with a learning disability. Six files were reviewed for students suspected of a learning disability and all had an observation conducted and, although limited information was written on

the multidisciplinary form, it was documented. The district may want to look at ways to improve the documentation of relevant behaviors observed within the regular classroom and relationship of these behaviors to the academic functioning.

The monitoring team was unable to validate that a transition evaluation/assessment were not conducted for students age sixteen or younger if appropriate.

#### **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Parent rights brochure
- Prior notice form
- Student file review

#### **Meets requirements**

Parent surveys indicate that parental rights information is given to parents with every prior notice/consent sent and at every IEP meeting held. The district's request for consent document includes the definition of consent. Consent was obtained in 100% of the files reviewed by the district for permission to evaluate and initial placement. The district's comprehensive plan ensures parents have been fully informed in their native language or another mode of communication (if necessary) of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought.

In regards to confidentiality and access to records, parents are provided copies of all educational records including IEP, assessments and eligibility reports at no cost. The district maintains records for at least 3 years and all records contain a record of access and types and location document.

The district's comprehensive plan includes policies and procedures for responding to complaint actions that ensure compliance. Corrective action procedures implemented following the complaint of 2000 are still being maintained to assure compliance.

The district addresses due process hearing procedures in the district's comprehensive plan. The district has not had a request for a due process hearing.

#### **Out of compliance**

The steering committee concluded from the self-assessment that a list of surrogate parents is not available in the district at this time. The district uses foster parents when parents cannot be located.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle Four, Procedural Safeguards. In addition, the monitoring team concluded that a list of surrogate parents is now available in the district and that training has occurred, which meets requirements.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Teacher surveys
- Parent surveys
- Student file reviews
- Early intervention (Part C) exit information
- Hearings
- Monitoring
- Student file reviews

### **Meets requirements**

In 100% of the student files reviewed, the IEP team included the required members. General education teachers attended all meetings and goal sheets with modifications identified are given to all teachers responsible for implementing any part of the IEP. Written prior notice for IEP meetings contains all required information and is sent to parents, students, educators and other appropriate representatives.

File reviews indicate the district consistently conducts annual reviews for students on IEPs, documents service dates, and provides services as soon as possible. The district also describes special education and related services to be given, as well as reports progress for students with an IEP.

### **Out of compliance**

The district does not consistently link present levels of performance to functional evaluations and annual goals. Short-term objectives are not consistently skill based and measurable, and modifications are not always appropriately documented.

When writing a transition plan, course of study needs to link to evaluation and life planning outcomes. Representatives from other agencies need to be invited to participate in transition post secondary education planning. Transition services and activities need to be more accurately documented in student IEP.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle Five, Individualized Education Program, with the exception of IEP content, transition,

participation in IEP team meeting and related services. The monitoring team was able to validate issues the district noted as out of compliance, which were linking functional evaluations to present levels of performance, annual goals and short-term objectives, modifications and transition services. See information under: Out of Compliance

### **Out of compliance**

#### Issues requiring immediate attention

##### ARSD24:05:27:04 Determination of related services

In deciding whether a particular developmental, corrective, or other supportive service is a related service, the members of the IEP team shall review the results of the individual evaluation used to determine the child's need for special education. Based on the specific special education services to be provided, the team shall determine whether or not related services are required in order to implement the special education program being recommend.

In review of one student file, the monitoring team found that related service being provided was not based on the specific special education services provided to the student. The student's disability identified on child count is speech/language; related services are occupational therapy (OT) and physical therapy (PT). Based on the specific special education services being provide to the student, related services were not required in order to implement the special education program, which was recommend by the IEP team. The student's IEP team must meet to review the student's needs and determine proper services that meet regulations.

##### ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the students identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In six of six files reviewed at the middle school and high school level, present levels of performance were not linked to functional evaluation. The present levels of performance stated skills that were not linked back to the functional assessment or contradicted information. For example: "\_\_\_ can read price signs". In the assessment it noted that he/she could not read price signs, and a present levels of performance need was to learn multiplication tables to 5 and tell time, neither skill related back to the functional assessment. Therefore, the student's present level of performance, annual goals and short-term instructional objectives did not link to evaluation. In addition annual goals were not consistently measurable. For example: "\_\_\_ will improve his language arts skills in function in life more effectively."

The IEP must describe individual modifications needed by the student, the anticipated frequency, location and duration of those modifications. In three of six files reviewed for students in middle school or older, there was not specific information to describe the modifications. In one file, the modification frequency was listed "as needed." In the other two files, no modifications were documented. The special education teacher noted that modification were made for one of those students but not documented. In addition, both students were taking alternative assessment due to their disabilities, which would indicate some types of modifications are needed.

##### ARSD 24:05:27:13.02. Transition services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities. For each student beginning at age 14, the IEP must include a statement of the transition service needs of the student that focuses on the student's course of study. For each student beginning at age 16, a statement of the needed transition services is required including interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages.

The life planning outcomes regarding employment and living were not student driven nor were the outcomes projected into the future. For example: "\_\_\_ will live with his family and/or need supported



full-time employment. \_\_\_ really likes cars”. Another example was “\_\_\_ will live with his family until he has graduated from high school”. The life planning outcomes are to be student driven and course of study, present level of performance, goals and objectives are to be used as planning devices/steps to ensure students achieve their desired outcomes for employment and living. In four of five files reviewed by the monitoring team, the present level of performances, goals and objectives were not written as a coordinated set of activities for the student, to promote movement from school to post-school activities. The special education director indicated transition was an area of some uncertainty and that inservice would be helpful to staff working in this area.

#### ARSD 24:05:25:16.01 Participation in IEP team meeting

If a purpose of the IEP team meeting is the consideration of transition services needs or transition services for a student, the district must identify any other agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition service and invite the agency to send a representative to the IEP meeting. In four of five files reviewed, the monitoring team concluded that a representative was not identified nor invited to the student’s transition IEP meeting.

### **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Parent surveys
- Teacher surveys
- Student file reviews
- Data table F, placement alternatives
- Child count data

#### **Meets requirements**

To ensure least restrictive environment the district consistently serves students with disabilities in the classroom and maximizes in-class instructional time.

#### **Validation Results**

##### **Promising practice**

Although the steering committee did not identify the district’s preschool as a promising practice, the monitoring team noted it through interviews and tour of the school. The preschool program is open to all children ages three through five. Two classrooms are set up to provide services by age grouping of three and four year olds and four and five year olds. There is one certified early childhood teacher and paraprofessional in each classroom. The curriculum focuses on the five developmental areas with a considerable amount of time spent on literacy learning. The children are encouraged to make good choices. Children identified with a disability are served in these programs. Some students are pulled out for speech therapy, physical therapy and occupational therapy, depending on their needs. This is the district’s third year of implementing the program and positive results were expressed from the first grade teacher.

An interdisciplinary social studies and language arts class at the 7<sup>th</sup> grade level was also noted by the monitoring team as a promising practice. The students are studying literature and learning about social studies as well. They are reading The Black Pearl and have read Island of the Blue Dolphins. The classroom teacher team teaches with a special education teacher. An interview with teachers indicated that students work together during learning center times, which has proven to be a positive learning environment. The centers are made up of a variety of students with various reading levels. Through observation, it was clear the students knew exactly what was expected of them. Two groups were working independently while each teacher worked with a group.

**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle Six, Least Restrictive Environment.